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Weekly Special Report



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INSIDE

President Obama to Nominate Ambassador Donald E. Booth to be Next U.S. Ambassador to Ethiopia

Addis Ababa, December 9, 2009: President Barack Obama announced on Wednesday his intent to nominate Donald E. Booth to be the next U.S. Ambassador to the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia.

In announcing his intention to nominate Ambassador Booth and other key U.S. Administration officials, President Obama said, "The depth of experience these individuals bring to their roles will be valuable to my administration as we work to bring about real



Donald E. Booth

change for the American people. I look forward to working with them in the months and years ahead."

Donald E. Booth is currently the United States Ambassador to the Republic of Zambia. Prior to that, Ambassador Booth served three years as Ambassador to the Republic of Liberia. Ambassador Booth previously served as Director of the Office of Technical and Specialized Agencies at the State Department's Bureau of International Organization Affairs. Prior to this position, he served as Director of the Office of West African Affairs.

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U.S. Urges Further Ethiopian Action on Human Rights

Addis Ababa, December 10, 2009 – The United States congratulates the Government of Ethiopia for its participation yesterday in the UN Human Rights Council's Universal Periodic Review (UPR) process in Geneva. The United States has been a strong supporter of the UPR process and looks forward to the review in 2010 of its own record in pro-

moting and protecting human rights and fundamental freedoms in the United States.

While recognizing the complex environment prevailing in many parts of Ethiopia, we commend the Government of Ethiopia for its declared commitments to promote and protect human rights. We appreciate the

Ethiopian Government's willingness to consider country visits by UN Human Rights Council special rapporteurs and mandate holders, and note that the UN Special Rapporteurs on the rights to freedom of opinion and expression, on torture, and on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, as well as the

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United States Contributes an Additional USD 70 Million to WFP to Assist Emergency Relief Beneficiaries

December 9, 2009, Addis Ababa: Before departing to-day from a five-day trip to Ethiopia, the US Ambassador to the United Nations Agencies in Rome, Ertharin Cousin announced an additional contribution of \$70 million to the World Food Program (WFP) to assist the emergency caseload for relief beneficiaries in this country. The contribution is provided from the American people through the U.S. Agency of International Development (USAID). WFP will facilitate management of the food contribution.

This is Ambassador Cousin's first trip to Ethiopia, and she spent much of her time in the field, visiting agricultural and livestock sites with the Minister of Agriculture H.E. Tefera Deribew, and traveling to the Somali region to see WFP and Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) assistance projects supported by the United States. Her focus in the Somali region was to see the WFP Hubs & Spokes operations, which streamline emergency food distributions, and FAO livestock veterinary interventions and training on livestock disease surveillance and reporting. Ambassador Cousin was also able to visit several Productive Safety Net Program (PSNP) sites and a school feeding program managed by WFP.

The USAID \$70 million contribution to WFP will provide an additional 92,310 MT of food to support the general relief program in Ethiopia for the 2010 calendar year. This contribution is the third major U.S. food relief contribution since October 2009, bringing the total U.S. contribution since October to \$246 million (356,560 MT). USAID programs its relief efforts through WFP



Ambassador Cousin speaking with women at USAID built livestock market.

and a consortium of NGOs led by Catholic Relief Services (CRS) to respond to the emergency need. The United States is also a significant contributor to PSNP, a food-for-work program led by the Ethiopian Government. These relief contributions will allow the U.S. to further respond to a portion of the relief needs recently released in the Joint Government and Humanitarian Partners' National Contingency Plan. This document identifies potential needs for the first six months of 2010. Since January of 2009, USAID has contributed over 630,000 metric tons of food valued at \$427.3 million to the relief response effort through WFP and NGO partners.

At the 2009 L'Aquila G-8 Summit in July, U.S. President Barack Obama pledged that the U.S. would invest \$3.5 billion in agriculture-led economic growth to combat hunger. Speaking about this while in Ethiopia, Ambassador Cousin explained, "The \$3.5 billion the United States has pledged is to support country-developed plans to achieve food security. It is not just about seed and fertilizer but includes education and market development and, in particular, support to women. In order to ensure sustainable gains,

plans will be made in coordination with governments with the aim of building capacity. By increasing the capacity for self-sufficiency, we can reduce the need for assistance in the future."

After a discussion with a group of women at the Jijiga livestock market, built through USAID's Pastoralists Livelihoods Initiative, Ambassador Cousin emphasized the need to provide entrepreneurial opportunities for women,

"The women told me that because they are earning incomes, they are no longer worried about where their food will come from and, as such, they are



Food distribution site near Jijiga.

now able to send their children to school."

Additional information on the Global Hunger and Food Security Initiative can be found at: www.state.gov/s/globalfoodsecurity. ♦

United States and Ethiopian Governments Underscore Shared Goals for Agriculture Development and Food Security

Representatives of the United States and Ethiopian governments on Saturday, December 5, 2009 pledged to continue close collaboration to address shared goals for agriculture development and food security.

During a joint field visit to a meat export abattoir and an animal feedlot in Mojo, His Excellency Ato Tefera Deribew, Ethiopian Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, Ambassador Ertharin Cousin of the U.S. Mission to the UN Agencies in Rome, and Ambassador Roger Meece, the U.S. Chargé d'Affaires in Ethiopia highlighted the close bilateral relationship of the two nations in both meeting immediate food needs for vulnerable populations as well as laying the longer term foundations for sustainable agricultural development in Ethiopia.

Minister Tefera and Ambassadors Cousin and Meece visited the Luna Export Abattoir and animal feedlot in Mojo, which is supported by USAID's



Owner of feed lot posing with Ato Tefer Deribew, Ethiopian Minister of Agriculture (Center), Ambassador Ertharin Cousin of the U.S. Mission to the UN Agencies in Rome (3rd right), and Ambassador Roger Meece the former U.S. Chargé d'Affaires (2nd right).

Sanitary and Phytosanitary Standards and Livestock Meat Marketing (SPS-LMM) Program. The SPS-LMM program assists Ethiopia to increase the

quality and competitiveness of the livestock sector, which allows Ethiopian farmers and pastoralists to obtain

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Working Group on Arbitrary Detention have outstanding visit requests.

The United States expresses the hope that Ethiopia will address positively the recommendations made to its delegation during the UPR session in Geneva. These recommendations included that the Ethiopian Government reassess the Charities and Societies Proclamation in light of concerns expressed by a number of UN member states that it will constrain rather than promote the long-term democratization, governance and stability of Ethiopia. Among other

important issues raised, member states also recommended greater humanitarian access to the Ogaden areas of the Somali region so that organizations such as the International Committee of the Red Cross and UN relief agencies can provide assistance to conflict victims.

The United States considers a vibrant and independent media to be one of the pillars of a strong democracy. As such, we are concerned about the recent closure of the Addis Neger newspaper, and the allegations of harassment and intimidation of private media. The outstanding charges against

private journalists, editors, publishers, and media houses may also contribute to a perception that space for independent media in Ethiopia is constrained. Ethiopia's constitution guarantees freedom of the press and that the press shall enjoy legal protection to ensure its capacity to entertain diverse opinions.

On International Human Rights Day, we welcome the Ethiopian Government's latest pledges and call on the government to work in earnest to address its obligations under international and domestic law. ♦

National HIV/AIDS Case Management Implementation Guidelines Launched

December 9, 2009, Addis Ababa: The Ethiopian Ministry of Health, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and University of Washington today launched National Case Management Implementation Guidelines for HIV/AIDS in Ethiopia at the Intercontinental Hotel, Addis Ababa. The guidelines offer a proactive approach to help clients adhere to anti-retroviral treatment (ART) and care in Ethiopia.

The Guidelines are the result of four years of collaboration by several stakeholders committed to developing a practical approach to providing quality care for HIV/AIDS clients, especially those needing chronic care which requires strict ART adherence and retention. Today's launch brought together health policy makers, delegates from the World Health Organization, U.S. Government, development partners, and various government agencies and non-governmental organizations.

The rapid scale-up of ART in Ethiopia has presented resource challenges for health facilities. Through improved HIV/AIDS case management, health facilities can proactively and systematically identify those HIV clients who are



Country Director of the United States' Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Dr. Tom Kenyon speaking at the event.

at risk for non-adherence with their treatment regimes. In addition to retaining clients on care, case management enables care-givers to provide them with critical support to ensure adherence and the continuity of care by using trained lay persons known as Adherence Case Managers and Adherence Supporters. HIV/AIDS case management also helps to trace and encourage clients who have not followed up on their treatment regimes to re-

sume their treatment and care. At the same time, it also involves shifting some of the tasks from over-burdened clinical staff to a trained Adherence Case Managers.

In 2006, the Ministry of Health requested University of Washington's International Training and Education Center for Health - Ethiopia (I-TECH) to develop a sustainable, pragmatic, and culturally appropriate case management model for the treatment and management of HIV clients in Ethiopia. Through funding from the U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) and technical assistance from the CDC, I-TECH,

the Ethiopian Ministry of Health, and the Federal HIV/AIDS Prevention and Control Office (FHAPCO) developed an HIV/AIDS case management model including training curricula in 2007. The model was piloted at six hospitals in the Amhara, Tigray, and Afar regions. The guidelines unveiled today expand this model nationwide. ♦

President Obama to Nominate Ambassador . . .

(Continued from page 1)

During his career in the State Department, Ambassador Booth has also served as the Deputy Director of the Office of Southern African Affairs, the Economic Counselor in Athens, and the Division Chief for Bilateral Trade Affairs; desk officer in the Office of Egyptian Affairs and the Office of East Afri-

can Affairs; and various roles while stationed at embassies in Bucharest, Brussels and Libreville.

Ambassador Booth earned a B.A. from Georgetown University, an M.A. from Boston University, and an M.A. in National Security Studies from the National War College. ♦

USAID, Partners Commemorate 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence

On Thursday, December 3, 2009 the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) joined its development partners to share experiences in combating gender based violence in Ethiopia and to commemorate 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence.

Her Excellency W/zo Muferehat Kamil, Women's Affairs Minister, and Ms. Nancy Estes, USAID/Ethiopia's Acting Mission Director attended the event, held at Pathfinder International. "USAID/Ethiopia stands in solidarity with its partners, government, and the people of Ethiopia in pledging to continue to work together to raise awareness that violence against women and girls is unacceptable, that it harms development, and damages lives and opportunities," Ms. Estes announced to the assembled crowd.

USAID partners at the event -- including Population Council, Pathfinder International, Engender Health, and



USAID officials, Nancy Estes and David Kahrman with a performer from Circuses Ethiopia before the event began.

Medical Sciences for Health (MSH) -- noted the need for education, life skills trainings, and engagement of men to prevent gender-based violence. Religious leaders also presented their work on gender-based violence, and a short drama and a film were shown by Circus Ethiopia and Biruh Tesfa, respectively.

(PEPFAR), devised a strategy to address gender inequalities and empower women through gender mainstreaming of all HIV/AIDS services, including prevention, care and support programs. ♦

Representatives from the Women's Affairs departments from the Ministries of Health, Education, and Youth Affairs, and health-related associations also attended the event.

Recognizing gender-based violence as one of the drivers of new HIV/AIDS infections, USAID, through funding from President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief

United States and Ethiopian Governments Underscore . . .

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higher income from the sale of their livestock. The SPS-LMM is the type of program that could be expanded under the United States' Global Hunger and Food Security Initiative to fulfill Ethiopia's agriculture development and food security requirements. Currently, USG agriculture development and food security programs provide over \$300 million of annual assistance to Ethiopia.

During the site visit, representatives of both governments emphasized the close bilateral relationship of the two nations, including a longstanding partnership of assistance to the agricultural sector through such initiatives and the Productive Safety Net Program, agriculture productivity improvement programs, livestock and pastoral programs, land administration support and promotion of high value agriculture exports. Ambassador Meece reaffirmed this partnership, stating: "The

U.S. Government is committed to working as part of a collaborative global effort to improve food security, centered on country-led plans and ambitions. Here in Ethiopia, we are working closely with the Ethiopian people and their government to help realize the country's tremendous agricultural potential." Additional information on the Global Hunger and Food Security Initiative can be found at www.state.gov/s/globalfoodsecurity. ♦

Refined Afghanistan Plan Will Lead to Success, U.S. Officials Say

Washington — The next 18 months in Afghanistan will be decisive and ultimately lead to success in rolling back the Taliban insurgents, General Stanley McChrystal told a U.S. congressional committee December 8.

"The mission is not only important, it is also achievable," McChrystal said.

Karl Eikenberry, the American ambassador to Afghanistan, and McChrystal, who commands both U.S. forces and the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force there, testified before the U.S. House Armed Services Committee and were scheduled to appear before other congressional committees during the week. Their testimony follows a week of testimony by Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton and Defense

Secretary Robert Gates, with Admiral Mike Mullen, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, in which they provided further answers to Congress on President Obama's decision to send additional forces to Afghanistan.

President Obama announced December 1 that he was sending an additional 30,000 U.S. forces to Afghanistan to bolster military operations, while also increasing civilian assistance to the Afghan government of President Hamid Karzai. The president's long-term goal is to restore stability and security to Afghanistan and create the necessary environment for Afghan national security forces — military and police — to provide for the country's security.

Eikenberry told the committee that the president's decision came after an intensive, deliberative and far-reaching review. Obama met nine times with his national security advisers, including Eikenberry and McChrystal, before announcing his redrawn strategy on na-

an extensive review, the mission was refined, and the way ahead was clarified. And he said that he fully agreed with McChrystal's strategic assessment sent to the president in July, on which the decision to send more forces is based.



Ambassador Eikenberry, left, and General McChrystal before their congressional testimony December 8.

tional television from the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, New York.

"I believe the course that the president outlined does offer the best path to stabilize Afghanistan and ensure al-Qaida cannot regain a foothold to plan new attacks against us," Eikenberry testified. "I can say without equivocation that I fully support this approach."

Eikenberry said that at no point during the deliberations did he oppose sending additional U.S. forces to Afghanistan. Eikenberry, a retired Army lieutenant general, commanded forces in Afghanistan before being named ambassador by Obama.

Eikenberry told the committee that after

ACHIEVABLE RESULTS

McChrystal said that the mission is achievable in Afghanistan because of the resolve of the Afghan people to see this conflict end.

"We do not confront a popular insurgency," McChrystal said. "The Taliban have no widespread constituency, have a history of failure in power and lack an appealing vision."

"Where our strategy is applied, we've begun to show that we can help the Afghans establish more security and more credible governance," he added.

The Afghan people do not see the U.S. and NATO-led forces as occupiers; they see the support as a bridge to future security and stability, McChrystal said.

Eikenberry said the entire Afghan strategy is built on three main pillars: security that is being provided by the United States and NATO allies, good governance and development.

"Our comprehensive strategy focuses on governance at the national and the sub-national levels," he said. "Our overarching goal is to encourage improved governance so Afghans can see the benefits of supporting the legitimate government, and the insurgency loses its support."

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Sudan Strategy Aimed at Saving Lives, Ensuring Durable Peace

By Merle David Kellerhals, Jr.
Staff Writer

Washington — The United States strategy for Sudan has three major goals: saving lives and ensuring a durable peace, implementing a long-standing peace agreement, and preventing Sudan from becoming a terrorist safe haven, a senior U.S. diplomat says.

“Failure to accomplish these goals could bring about additional suffering, further regional instability or new safe havens for international terrorists,” Special Envoy Scott Graton said in testimony December 3 to a U.S. House of Representatives subcommittee. Graton recently returned from a November 16–November 23 trip to , where he traveled to Khartoum, Abyei and Darfur.

Graton said the United States continues to work closely with the African Union and the United Nations to relieve the suffering and grievances of the people of Darfur, meeting frequently with envoys from Britain, China, France, Russia (which are permanent members of the U.N. Security Council, along with the United States) and the European Union to coordinate efforts. He said they met most recently in Moscow and in Abuja to coordinate positions to fulfill the Doha Peace Process.

“To give the Doha negotiations the best possible chances of success, we believe that the fragmented armed movements in Darfur must unite and speak at the negotiating table with one voice,” Graton said in his testimony. As a result of efforts to make this critical element of the peace process work, eight former rebel factions have formed a coalition and are committed to having a wider unification, he added.

And the United States believes that the people of the Darfur region must have a



U.S. Special Envoy to Sudan Scott Graton talks to reporters after his meeting with Sudanese presidential advisor Ghazi Salaheddin (R) in Khartoum on November 2009.

voice in the peace process. Recently, discussions were held with members of Darfuri civil society in Doha, the capital city of Qatar.

“Throughout the peace process, we will continue to support and strengthen the African Union–United Nations Mission in Darfur (UNAMID),” Graton said. That means, he added, holding those who obstruct UNAMID’s work accountable and providing direct financial and logistical support for UNAMID’s full deployment. UNAMID is also planning contingencies for a potential worsening of the crises in Darfur, he said.

The U.S. House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Africa held the December 3 hearing to develop a deeper understanding of President Obama’s Sudan strategy, which was announced in October (<http://www.america.gov/st/peacesec->

[english/2009/October/20091019125957esnamfuak0.4526789.html](http://www.america.gov/st/peacesec-english/2009/October/20091019125957esnamfuak0.4526789.html)) by Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton, U.S. Permanent Representative to the United Nations Susan Rice and Graton. Graton said, “The United States has a clear obligation and a clear interest to lead international efforts for peace in Sudan.”

Clinton unveiled a “comprehensive” U.S. policy toward resolving the conflicts in Sudan October 19, focused on achieving the goals of ending human rights abuses and genocide in Darfur and fully implementing the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) between the government and the Sudan People’s Liberation Movement (SPLM).

The situation in Sudan has emerged as one of the largest and most devastating humanitarian crises of the 21st century. More than 20 years of fighting between the government and the SPLM has killed more than 2 million people, and key portions of the 2005 CPA remain unfulfilled, representing “a dangerous flashpoint” for future armed conflict, Clinton said in October. In addition, Sudan’s ruling National Congress Party (NCP) and government-supported militia launched a genocidal campaign in 2003 against ethnic groups affiliated with a potential rebellion, killing hundreds of thousands, displacing 2.7 million people and creating more than 250,000 refugees. Sudan’s current president, Omar al-Bashir, has been indicted by the International Criminal Court for his alleged role in the Darfur genocide.

PEACE AGREEMENT

Graton told legislators that the United States and the international community must focus on a comprehensive approach to peace in Sudan, and that re-

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Maritime Pirates Threaten Everyone, Especially Africa's Hungry

By Charles W. Corey
Staff Writer

Washington — Oceangoing ships are responsible for moving at least 80 percent of all commerce world-wide, so maritime pirates are a threat to everyone, especially those who are starving in Somalia and East Africa and rely on ships to deliver emergency shipments of food aid.

Robert W. Maggi, the U.S. Department of State's coordinator for counterpiracy, made that point in a November 23 interview with America.gov.

"The United States and international community are trying to feed those facing chronic hunger and starvation in Somalia and the Horn of Africa, but the ships carrying that humanitarian food aid must contend with pirates who are seeking to hijack and ransom emergency food shipments for their own personal and selfish financial gain," he said.

"The United States strongly condemns all piracy on the high seas and views piracy off the coast of Somalia as being a symptom of difficulties and problems that are ongoing ashore."

Maggi described the piracy, ransoming and hijacking off the coast of East Africa as "criminal activity," possibly driven by economic circumstances in that region.

Recently, the Maersk Alabama was carrying 5,230 metric tons of humanitarian food bound for the East Africa region on behalf of USAID's Food for Peace Program when four suspected pirates attempted to board and hijack the vessel 560 nautical miles off the northeast coast of Somalia. That food would provide a daily survival ration to 330,000 people for about 30 days.



The MV Ibn Batouta offloaded its shipment in Mogadishu, Somalia, December 7, 2008. It was escorted by the Dutch warship De Ruyter.

The ship successfully repelled the hijackers with a combination of evasive maneuvers, long-range acoustical devices and action by an armed security team onboard the ship. No injuries to the crew or damage were reported in the incident.

That event, Maggi said, illustrates the need for vessels to take appropriate self-protection measures when transiting waters off the Horn of Africa.

"The United States," he said, "urges vessels to implement internationally recognized best management practices as developed by the shipping industry, their flag registry states, and the International Maritime Organization. These practices include self-protection measures such as increasing lookouts, taking evasive action, ensuring ladders are raised on ships, increasing lighting at night, and readying fire pumps to repel boarders. They may also include armed or unarmed security teams on board."

An international armada of naval vessels from some 26 nations is now working to combat the piracy problem off the coast of East Africa. It includes ships from Japan, Russia and China in a "pretty unprecedented way," Maggi said, because there is universal desire to eliminate piracy.

Piracy is not limited to the East African coast, he noted, but also occurs in West Africa, the waters off India, the South China Sea and the Caribbean.

The piracy problem in East Africa is exacerbated by the lack of a government in Somalia, he said. "What is different between Somalia and anywhere else is that I am not able to think of any geographic area in which there is no government to fight the problem. It is an ungoverned space. When you start looking at what Somaliland says, what Puntland says, and what the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) says and the fact that they often don't agree with each other," find-

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Maritime Pirates Threaten Everyone, Especially Africa's Hungry . . .

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ing a solution to the problem is even more difficult, Maggi said.

While piracy success rates off the coast of Somalia have dropped from 60 percent in 2007 to less than 25 percent today, Maggi said piracy is still a big problem in an area off the coast of Somalia that exceeds 1 million square miles.

The pirates often use large “mother ships” that allow them to venture farther and farther away from shore, he said.

In an attempt to find what Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton has called a 21st-century solution to a 17th-century problem, Maggi reiterated that the United States is a nation that adheres to the rule of law, unlike the pirates, who are working on an entirely different standard.

“That is why,” he said, “the United States and others formed the Contact Group on Piracy off the Coast of Somalia (<http://www.state.gov/t/pm/ppa/piracy/contactgroup/>) in January 2009 — which now includes some 50 nations partnered with the shipping industry — to develop anti-piracy solutions.

Maggi said security on ships is also affected by financial factors. “When you have a weak economy [such as now, when as much as 10 percent of the world’s freighters are idled and anchored because of the global recession], the profit margin becomes much more important for each ship and shipping line. The problem is complex for those shipping lines,” he said. “They have to consider the safety and welfare of their ships and crew, their reputation, etc. It is all risk management.”

There are now about 12 ships being held by the pirates off the coast of East Africa, including the 300,000-ton, Greek-flagged supertanker Maran Centaurus, which was seized November 29 some 800 miles off the Somali coast near the Seychelles.

Some 30,000 ships like the Maran Centaurus pass through the Suez Canal — between the Indian and Mediterranean Oceans — each year, and the ships, their crews and goods, which are bound for ports worldwide, are threatened by the pirates.

(This is a product of the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://www.america.gov>) ♦

Sudan Strategy Aimed at Saving Lives, Ensuring Durable Peace

(Continued from page 7)

quires full implementation of the CPA. In Khartoum, the two parties to the CPA — the National Congress Party and the Sudan People’s Liberation Movement — continue their discussions to resolve key outstanding issues relating to the 2010 national elections and the 2011 referendums in Southern Sudan and Abyei.

The Comprehensive Peace Agreement, which is sometimes called the Naivasha Agreement for the place where it was signed in Kenya, set a series of agreements between the Sudan People’s Liberation Movement and the Sudanese government. It was intended to end a

two-decade-old civil war between the North and the South, help establish a democratic government and provide for sharing oil revenues. It also set a timetable for Southern Sudan to hold a referendum on its independence. The current coalition government ends in 18 months with the southern referendum.

“Without immediate resolution of these disputes, we are concerned about the chances for conducting credible elections and referenda,” the State Department said November 27 ([http://www.america.gov/st/texttrans-english/2009/November/20091127113901ptellivremos0.8574](http://www.america.gov/st/texttrans-english/2009/November/20091127113901ptellivremos0.857464.html)

64.html). “Unfortunately, the parties have not yet demonstrated the political will necessary to achieve resolution on these difficult and sensitive issues.”

Graton testified that the two most pressing issues are the use of contested census results for voter registration in the upcoming elections and disagreements on procedures for the referendum on self-determination for Southern Sudan.

(This is a product of the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://www.america.gov>) ♦

World Food Security: U.S. Investment in Agricultural Development

(begin transcript)

The United States will invest \$3.5 billion over three years to spur agricultural growth in a sustainable, environmentally friendly way.

Alonzo Fulgham, acting administrator of the U.S. Agency for International Development, addressed the World Summit on Food Security in Rome November 17th. He said that 2009 should be marked as the year in which countries reversed the decline in investment in agriculture and took up the challenge to ensure global food security for all.

The U.S. pledge is part of the \$22 billion committed by the leaders of the world's major economies at summits in July and August to alleviate world hunger and poverty, Fulgham said.

The U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization reported that official development assistance to agriculture decreased by some 58 percent between 1980 and 2005. It now accounts for about 5 percent of all aid. Underinvestment in agriculture and rural development has worsened due to food and economic crises,

according to the organization.

Fulgham said the United States welcomes a declaration adopted at the summit to alleviate world hunger and malnutrition. The declaration is the first time

tions, such as the one now threatening food security in the Horn of Africa, Fulgham said. He said particular attention should be given to small landholder farmers, fish farmers, pastoralists and women.



"The question is not whether we can end hunger, it's whether we will." — Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton.

the entire United Nations membership has agreed to take significant action to improve food security through agricultural development, he said.

Countries agreed to reverse the decline in domestic and international funding for agricultural development and to support country-led plans. They also agreed to improve collaboration among governments, regional and international organizations, the nonprofit sector and food producers.

The declaration calls for focusing efforts on a range of agricultural activities and continuing the response to crisis situa-

The Food and Agriculture Organization estimates that by 2050, global food production must increase by 70 percent.

(end transcript)

(Distributed by the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://www.america.gov>) ♦

Public Diplomacy Web Contest Open to International, U.S. Students

By Melissa Quijada
Staff Writer

Washington — Young participants in an international online diplomacy competition are hopping on the social networking train to create and promote their projects, which help teach others about international issues and the value of diplomacy.

"In the last few years, students have promoted their projects via Web 2.0 [interactive] tools like Twitter and Facebook. They are putting their videos on YouTube," says Yvonne Andrés, executive director of the Global SchoolNet Foundation, which co-sponsors and manages the Doors to Diplomacy online competition for the U.S. State Department.

The 2009 Doors to Diplomacy winners — students from Sumatra and the U.S. state of Georgia — use tools such as Twitter, videos, animation, comment forums and interactive games to help deliver their messages. The Sumatra, Indonesia, students hope to motivate other students and community members to appreciate and preserve traditional arts and culture, while the Georgia students created a fictional character named Captain Water to teach about water conservation.

For the eighth year in a row, the Doors to Diplomacy contest invites international and American students to promote positive online global relations. The deadline for entries is March 23, 2010. For the contest, teams of two to four students, ages 12–19, and up to two adult coaches create Web projects on international issues and propose diplomatic solutions.

Winners will be announced in May 2010. Each student member of the two winning

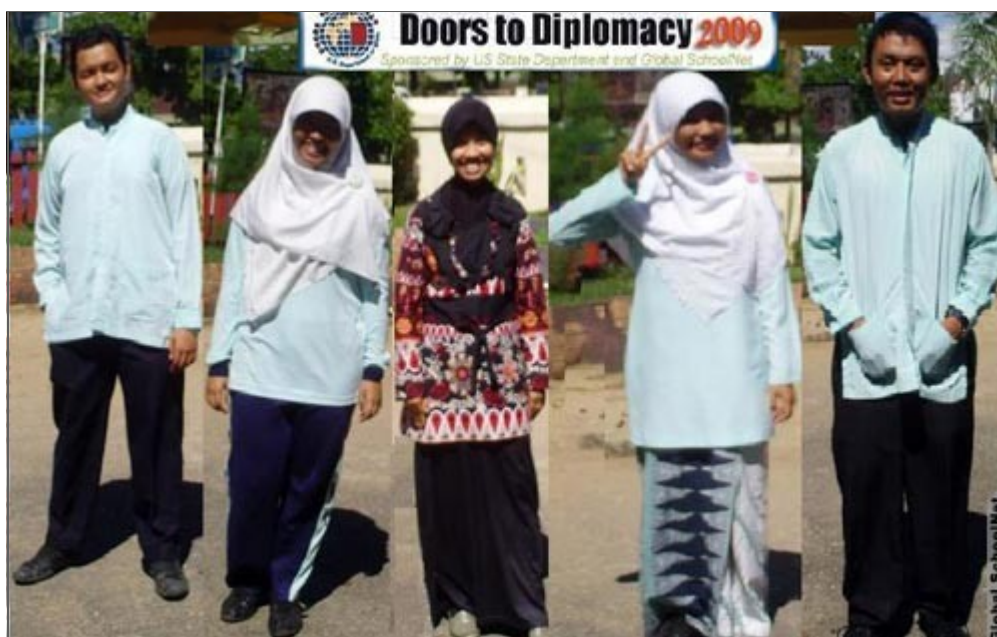
teams receives a \$2,000 scholarship, and their coaches' schools earn a \$500 cash award. Past international winners have hailed from Bulgaria, India, Macedonia, Mexico, Taiwan and Uzbekistan.

WEB SITE CONTENT VERSUS FLASHY DESIGN

While the use of social networking tools can be "a plus," says Janice Clark of the

international team members such as the 2008 winners from Bulgaria, infrastructure was a major obstacle: they had one computer between the four team members and no car. Despite that, the Bulgarian team still visited a nuclear power plant, conducted a community survey, and created their Web site to win first prize."

An extra challenge for international en-



The top international team of students from Padang, Sumatra, Indonesia, created a Web project on preserving their Minangkabau culture.

State Department, the Doors to Diplomacy judges "look for informative content over interactivity and flashy design."

"The real emphasis of the contest is on the quality of learning and understanding of diplomacy and international cooperation," says Clark, who helps judge the contest. "Does the research seem thorough? Did the students serve as 'ambassadors' in their communities by reaching out to discuss and inform on the issue their project is addressing?"

Many teams must overcome challenges to complete their projects, she said. "For

tries is that the Web site has to be in English.

"Some of the teams have to carefully schedule their Internet time, and some [personal computers and connections] are slower. So they definitely face challenges," says Clark. "That's one of the reasons why we don't put too much stock in the glitz of the end product."

The students are required to help build an audience for their projects through publicity and community projects, and they also must evaluate four other

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Public Diplomacy Web Contest Open to International, U.S. Students . . .

(Continued from page 11)

teams' entries, a task that usually turns out to be a great learning experience, says Clark.

2009 WINNERS

The 2009 winners from Sandy Creek High School in Tyrone, Georgia, created an animated, blue-hair superhero, Captain Water, who promotes water conservation. They created the site in response to Georgia's drought last year, and Captain Water sends regular updates on the crisis via Twitter and e-mail. "It is vital for Georgians and others to realize that water is a limited precious resource and that people take it for granted," the students wrote in their project summary.

"The Captain Water team became proactive ambassadors for their water conservation message by using social media to advertise their Web site," says Andrés. "They also became spokespersons for their project by visiting local elementary schools and making presentations."

The Indonesian winners from SMA 1 Padang, Sumatra, produced a Web site promoting art and cultural youth activities of the Minangkabau, an ethnic group of the West Sumatra highlands. The Web site features a blog and several YouTube videos that exhibit various aspects of Minangkabau culture, including traditional music and clothing.

"Our lives cannot be separated from arts and culture, because arts and culture represent the identities of a country or a society and can be the 'door to diplomacy'," wrote the Indonesian team in their project description.

In 2006, a group of young Ghanaian football (soccer) fans created what Andrés considers one of the most inspiring pro-

jects to date. The students utilized their limited resources by relying on a borrowed laptop and an Internet café nearly 20 kilometers from their high school to send their work to students in San Diego, California, who then created the Web site for them.

macy.webnode.com/sitemap/) and Captain Water Helps Teach Kids How To Conserve Water (<http://www.captainwater.com/>).

More information about the 2010 Doors to Diplomacy competition (<http://www.globalschoolnet.org/gsndoors/>) is



The top American team from Tyrone, Georgia, created an animated character, Captain Water, for their Web project on water conservation.

For a winning presentation, students need to concentrate on original research, incorporate diplomacy in all aspects and create a comprehensive step-by-step project narrative, documenting how they built the Web site, according to Andrés.

"A project needs to be interactive, so it's not like a brochure," she says. "These type of sites grow in value the more people use it."

In addition to the top two prizes, this year Doors to Diplomacy gave special recognition to entries from Bulgaria, Cyprus, Georgia, India, Poland, Puerto Rico, Romania, Singapore, Taiwan, Turkey, and several U.S. states.

The winning 2009 Web sites are: Preserving Arts and Culture of Minangkabau Through Youth Activities ([available on the Web site of Global SchoolNet, a nonprofit group dedicated to collaborative online learning. Also see "International Students Attracted to Diplomacy Web Site Contest \(<http://www.america.gov/st/washfile-english/2007/>](http://minangteamdoortodiplo-</p></div><div data-bbox=)

November/20071106125615xlrennef0.6753504.html)" and the State Department contest announcement (<http://www.america.gov/st/texttrans-english/2009/September/20091030154933eaifas0.4178583.html>).

(This is a product of the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://www.america.gov>) ♦

Sesame Street Celebrates 40 Years

By Carrie Loewenthal Massey
Special Correspondent

Washington — Mohammad al Kassim remembers the fundamental lessons of childhood: counting to 10, the alphabet, how to wait his turn, the importance of hand washing. He recalls these lessons as songs, performed by the puppets on Iftah ya Simsim (Open Sesame), the Arabic version of Sesame Street that aired in his home in Kuwait.

Premiering in 1979, Iftah ya Simsim was the first local Arabic production of Sesame Street, a children's educational television show, in the Middle East. Iftah ya Simsim based its core values — children's education, a love of learning, self-respect and understanding others — on the themes of the original Sesame Street, which celebrates its 40th birthday in 2009.

American public broadcasting first aired Sesame Street on November 10, 1969. It is now the longest-running children's television program. It remains unique in creating programming that educates children and reflects cutting-edge educational philosophies. For example, in addition to the show's standard math and reading lessons, puppet Abby Cadabby and her classmates model creative, critical thinking and collaboration as they solve problems together, without their teacher.

"To solve problems, we have to work with others — we can't solve them alone. We need to see the teacher as a facilitator, not just someone who gives you the answer," Rosemarie Truglio, vice president of education and research at Sesame Workshop, explained in a press release. Sesame Workshop is the New

York City-based nonprofit organization that supports Sesame Street programming and conducts other educational outreach.

Teaching children to think in new ways has defined Sesame Street and its 25 international partner productions since their inception.



"Open Sesame had a major influence on me as a human being. It provided me with an alternative way of learning that hardly existed ... at the time," al Kassim told the Worldfocus newscast.

On its 40th birthday, Sesame Street's influence extends to more than 140 countries. In the Middle East, these areas include Egypt, Jordan, Israel and the West Bank.

In each region, Sesame Street writers meet with local educational leaders to set the agenda for the production. It is the show's mission to tackle pressing

educational and social issues to help children overcome challenges they may face. This mission has led each Middle Eastern production to develop a different focus.

Alam Simsim, the Egyptian Sesame Street, enjoys huge popularity throughout the country and helps to promote the Egyptian government's goal to increase literacy among girls. Producers created Khoka, a 4-year-old puppet who sings about how wonderful education is and dreams of all the different careers she may want to pursue.

Khoka has appeared on Egyptian television daily since 2000 and over satellite throughout the Middle East and North Africa since 2003, sending young girls the message that they can grow up to be whatever they want to be.

"Everyone wants [Khoka] as an example and wants to be bright and clever and quick like her," an Egyptian mother of three young girls told Sesame Workshop.

According to impact studies conducted by Sesame Workshop, Khoka and her Alam Simsim counterparts' messages have fostered positive changes in gender equity, literacy and math levels among viewers in Egypt.

Also focused in part on girls' education, the Jordanian production, Hikayat Simsim, strives to incorporate humor that is relevant to children, and also portrays a modern Jordanian culture that uses technology in the learning process. Tonton and Juljul, the puppet stars of the show, are an imaginative, funny duo of best friends: Tonton is outgoing and optimistic, while Juljul models patience and a love of computers.

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Sesame Street Celebrates 40 Years . . .

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Through its characters, Hikayat Simsim conveys Jordan's "rich cultural heritage," while helping to foster self-esteem in its viewers, both male and female, explained executive producer Khaled Haddad.

In Israel and the West Bank, the productions' messages shift to promoting tolerance and acceptance within diverse societies.

When the Israeli production, Rechov Sumsum, launched a new series of episodes in 2006, Israeli officials revealed a new bilingual street sign in the city of Haifa that featured the Sesame Street name in both Hebrew and Arabic, symbolizing the message of community the show wants to send.

Rechov Sumsum models its lessons of cooperation and peaceful problem-solving through storylines in which puppets work together to find amicable solutions to their problems. For instance, an argument over a toy rabbit that both puppets want results in the development of a time-sharing plan wherein puppets keep the rabbit on different nights.

The Israeli production aims to reflect all of the diversities of modern Israeli society, and incorporates depictions of the expanding Russian-Israeli and Ethiopian-Israeli communities.

According to Alona Abt, executive director at Channel Hop, the network that airs the show, Rechov Sumsum's depiction of a peaceful, diverse society "shows children hope, presenting the way life could be when you can believe in yourself and in others ... when you can grow up and be happy."

Like the Israeli version, the Palestinian Sesame Street production, Shara'a Simsim, does not directly reference politics in the region, but teaches tolerance and empathy. The show focuses on youth living positive, hopeful lives, filled with healthy activities that promote outlets for the daily stress they experience. Puppet characters play sports, take an interest in airplanes and join the Boy Scouts as examples of things boys can do.

"We want to show boys that they can enjoy life, share and participate without having to prove that they are tough and without reverting to violence," said Cairo

Arafat, the production's content adviser.

Sesame Workshop is currently trying to broadcast Shara'a Simsim in the Gaza Strip. As of now, the West Bank television signal does not carry far enough.

"I believe the program needs to be seen and we'll use whatever means we can to get it to the children," said the president of Sesame Workshop, Gary Knell, at an October 21, 2009, news conference in Jerusalem.

Though still trying to reach Gaza, Sesame Street's global presence does already make it what Knell calls "the longest street in the world."

The Egyptian, Jordanian and Palestinian Sesame Street co-productions receive the majority of their funding from the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), with additional funds leveraged from the private sector in each country.

(This is a product of the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://www.america.gov>) ♦

Refined Afghanistan Plan Will Lead to Success, U.S. Officials Say . . .

(Continued from page 6)

A significant aspect of good governance, he said, is the need to combat corruption and promote the rule of law.

In economic development, Eikenberry said, the focus of U.S. efforts has shifted to building key aspects in Afghanistan's private-sector economy — increasing emphasis on agriculture, enhancing government revenue collection and improving the coordination of assistance by the

United States government and the international community.

Eikenberry said that while U.S. and NATO-led forces work to bring stability and security to the country, on the civilian side, the United States seeks to expand employment and provide essential services, and to improve critical ministries and the economy at the national level.

"These steps together will, I believe, help us to remove insurgents from the battle-

field and build support for the Afghan government," Eikenberry told the lawmakers. "After a difficult election, the Afghan government does show signs of recognizing the need to deliver better governance and security."

(Distributed by the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://www.america.gov>) ♦

Clinton, Africa Experts Laud Kenya Constitution Reform Process

By Jim Fisher-Thompson
Staff Writer

Washington — Americans who wish Kenya well, including the secretary of state, are lauding the attempt by the country's coalition government to craft a new constitution aimed at unifying the nation and ending the corruption and violence that has characterized its political life.

A Committee of Experts published the "Harmonised Draft Constitution" on November 17 and Kenyans have 30 days to review the draft and suggest changes. The draft will then be submitted to parliament for approval, with a view to holding a national referendum in mid-2010.

In a statement following its publication, Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton complimented Kenyans, saying, "I am pleased that they have taken this step, which represents a major milestone" in the political reform process of the nation.

She said the United States is "committed to supporting the Kenyan people's efforts to implement their reform agenda," adding, "I encourage all Kenyans to use the 30-day comment period to engage in a constructive and substantive dialogue on a new constitution."

It is an opportunity, Clinton added, "for the Kenyan people to help determine the content of the constitution and come together to build a system of government that serves and protects the interests of all, regardless of political affiliation, ethnic group or faith."

Speaking recently to members of a Kenyan legal association, U.S. Ambassador Michael Ranneberger touched on the

urgency of constitutional reform, saying, "I agree with the increasingly unified voice of Kenyans who are insisting that it is critical to have a new constitution now, and not at some undefined future date."

Like Clinton, Ranneberger termed the reform process a milestone on the nation's path to true democracy, saying he hoped "this historic opportunity is not lost."



Secretary of State Clinton is welcomed to Nairobi by Kenyan Foreign Minister Moses Wetangula and U.S. Ambassador Michael Ranneberger.

It is important, the diplomat added, that the new constitution "address the difficult issues head-on, including the structure of executive power, the system for devolution, and judicial independence."

Ranneberger stressed that "meaningful and comprehensive constitutional revision is crucial to create a framework in which all Kenyans can compete without fear that any ethnic group or community will be disadvantaged."

Ambassador Don Yamamoto, principal deputy assistant secretary of state for African affairs, who was most recently

U.S. envoy to Ethiopia, told America.gov Kenya's role in the region could be enhanced if it implemented constitutional reforms.

The nation's stature in Africa and globally will benefit if "the country is brought together behind a system of government that gives citizens the confidence that all their interests will be served without one group or person being favored over another," he explained.

Kenyans can be a model for others "if they can finish the reform process and have a successful referendum on a new constitution because it will be a very tangible display of democracy in action," Yamamoto added.

The lack of checks and balances and independence for the judiciary in the old constitution led to a winner-take-all mentality that stymied compromise and proved a fertile ground for corruption as well as violence. Following Kenya's disputed December 2007 presidential election, an estimated 1,500 people were killed in ethnically charged violence.

In early 2008, former U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan brokered a power-sharing agreement that led to creation of a coalition government. In the new arrangement, President Mwai Kibaki retained his office and opposition leader Raila Odinga was placed in a newly created position of prime minister. Significantly, the power-sharing agreement set out a broad range of reforms, including constitutional reform designed to address the underlying causes of the violence.

While the power-sharing agreement stopped the violence, political gridlock ensued, in part because the prime minister's powers were not clearly defined. In addition, an already bloated government

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U.S. Struggle Against Hate Crimes Is Unending Effort

By Jim Fisher-Thompson
Staff Writer

Washington — Before he was assassinated in 1968, African-American civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr. said, “Hatred paralyzes life ... confuses life ... darkens life.” Since then the American people and their government have dedicated themselves to battling bias and the violence it often engenders.

Federal law now defines a hate crime as bias that is acted upon in a direct, harmful way against a person or property the offender intentionally selects based on race, color, religion, national origin, ethnicity, gender, disability or sexual orientation.

In the United States, racial bias against African Americans remains the most frequently reported reason for hate crimes, which can range from vandalism to physical assault, and in extreme cases murder.

Attorney General Eric Holder touched on the problem in June when he testified before the Senate Judiciary Committee considering new hate crime legislation. Holder, the first African American to hold the position of U.S. attorney general, said the bill was important because “hate crimes victimize not only individuals, but entire communities.”

Holder told lawmakers, “Hate crimes statistics reported to the FBI by state and local law enforcement agencies demonstrate that we have a significant hate crimes problem in this country. Over the past decade, approximately half of the hate crime incidents reported in the United States were racially motivated.”

At the same time, Holder said, “many other victim classes are targeted for hate crimes. For example, during the last decade, religiously motivated incidents have generally accounted for the second highest number of hate crime incidents, fol-

lowed closely by sexual orientation bias incidents.”

Recent statistics also indicate that hate crimes against people of Hispanic national origin have increased four years in a row, he said.

In its most recent report of hate crime statistics (<http://www.fbi.gov/ucr/>

African-American man who in 1988 was dragged to death on a three-mile section of country road in rural Texas.

The new act is the first expansion of federal civil rights laws since the mid-1990s. It adds several new categories of biases based on gender, disability and sexual orientation. The law was co-named for Matthew Shepard, a young man who was



President Obama greets guests after signing the Hate Crime Prevention Act of 2009.

[hc2008/index.html](http://www.fbi.gov/ucr/hc2008/index.html)), the FBI noted that hate crimes for 2008 were slightly up over the previous year: 7,783 incidents with 9,691 victims — including individuals, businesses and institutions — with 4,943 crimes based on race.

Most states have laws against hate crimes, and in 2004 Congress provided funding for anti-hate crime training to state and local law enforcement agencies. Nongovernmental organizations like the U.S.-based International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) (<http://www.theiacp.org/>) also host conferences and provide written guidance on the issue. On October 28, President Obama signed the Matthew Shepard and James Byrd Jr. Hate Crime Prevention Act, named in part for James Byrd Jr., an

killed in Wyoming in 1998. During his murderer’s trial, witnesses said Shepard was targeted because he was homosexual. Over the past 10 years, the FBI reported more than 12,000 hate crimes based on sexual orientation.

At a signing ceremony at the White House attended by Byrd’s and Shepard’s family members, Obama called the bill another step in the continuing struggle to protect human rights. “We must stand against crimes that are meant not only to break bones, but to break spirits — not only to inflict harm, but to instill fear.”

Following the attack on the United States by Islamic terrorists on September 11,

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MENA Organizations Work to Abolish Violence Against Women

By Carrie Loewenthal Massey
Special Correspondent

Washington — Violence against women, a truly global issue, crosses cultural, economic and political lines. At least one of every three women in the world has suffered some form of violence, from beatings to sexual crimes, according to the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM).

The United States is no exception. It is estimated that the United States pays upwards of \$5.8 billion annually (in 2009 dollars) for medical care and loss of productivity caused by spousal violence alone, as indicated in a 2003 report of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Determined to erase these grim statistics at home and abroad, the Obama administration has committed to combating violence against women. President Obama has appointed special advisers to fight for women's rights, such as Melanne Verweir, the first U.S. ambassador-at-large for global women's issues. On November 25, Elimination of Violence Against Women Day, Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton said the time has come to take steps to eradicate gender-based violence, to recognize that such violence "is criminal."

Through partnerships and funding efforts, the United States helps support efforts under way in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) to eliminate violence against women. Projects in the region, spearheaded by local and international nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and government affiliates, include fighting domestic violence, honor killings and sexual harassment, as well as informing women of their legal rights to help them out of abusive situations.

FIGHTING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

KAFA, a Beirut, Lebanon-based NGO, provides a full array of services to victims of domestic violence. Through its established network of providers, the organization connects women to legal services, shelter, vocational training and therapy. KAFA, which means "ENOUGH" (as in "enough violence against women") works in partnership with British Oxfam, with funding from the U.N. Trust Fund to End Violence Against Women, to which the United States is a leading government donor.



One of KAFA's foremost initiatives is to garner the support of men and boys in combating domestic violence. To successfully spread an anti-violence message in the region, KAFA is training the leaders of women's organizations in Lebanon, Jordan, Egypt, Yemen and Syria to give them the skills to work with male community leaders, youth and perpetrators.

"We work on a human rights basis," KAFA program coordinator Ghida Anani said, clarifying the group's mission in an interview with Oxfam. "We are against violence, not men."

In addition to its work with men and boys, KAFA invites religious leaders to all of its events and works closely with court systems to enact anti-violence laws. The organization helped train 22 Iraqi judges in the complexity and sensitive nature of domestic violence cases.

Just as the Obama administration has prioritized women's rights, so too has the Jordanian government. Jordan's present efforts began in 2001 with the creation of the National Council for Family Affairs (NCFA). Led by Queen Rania Al-Abdullah, the NCFA is conducting a survey to determine the effectiveness of systems in place to fight domestic violence. The NCFA plans to use the survey to determine gaps in services available to Jordanian women and propose improvements. This initiative runs concurrently with the NCFA's efforts to generate a national definition of violence against women, raise awareness of the issue, and enhance and streamline efforts to combat the violence.

Other MENA countries sustain efforts to support domestic violence victims and increase the problem's visibility. People now speak of the issue more frequently in Qatar and Saudi Arabia, according to the February 2009 publication *Women's Rights in the Middle East and North Africa, Gulf Edition*, released by Freedom House. Freedom House is a Washington-based NGO that supports efforts in the MENA region to end violence against women. The report also notes that the government of the United Arab Emirates oversees a shelter for domestic violence victims in Dubai.

Advocacy against domestic violence and support for victims has also steadily increased in Bahrain in recent years, Freedom House reports. Local NGOs provide shelter, free legal advice and rehabilitation services for victims. One successful partnership between the U.S.-based NGO

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MENA Organizations Work to Abolish Violence Against Women. . .

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Vital Voices, the Bahraini company Smart Coaching and Research Center, and the U.S. State Department's Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) promotes civil society's participation in the fight against domestic violence and trains people in advocacy and volunteerism.

STOPPING HONOR KILLINGS

One of MEPI's main objectives is to empower women throughout MENA. Exemplifying these efforts, MEPI's local grant with the Society Voice Foundation (SVF) in the Palestinian Territories encouraged women to lobby for legislation against honor killings and all forms of violence against women. Honor killings occur within families and involve the murder of a female member believed to have dishonored the family, perhaps by engaging in a sexual act, marrying someone of her choice, or dressing unacceptably.

MEPI supported SVF in training 150 young Palestinian women, many of whom had media and communications backgrounds, in developing their advocacy skills. Although the SVF project ended December 31, 2008, the impact of their training, radio programs, community town hall meetings and advocacy campaigns continues to be felt in the Palestinian Territories.

PROTECTING WOMEN FROM SEXUAL HARASSMENT

In the United States, laws defining and prohibiting different forms of sexual harassment in the workplace have under-

gone continual refinement and revision since the 1970s. While women still report thousands of instances of sexual harassment each year, these laws take an important step toward empowering women to fight for their proper treatment at work.

The Egyptian Center for Women's Rights (ECWR) is working similarly to empower Egyptian women to fight sexual harassment, but the center's work goes beyond employment discrimination. The ECWR wants to eliminate the harassment women experience walking public streets. Through a media and public outreach campaign, advocacy for enforcement of current laws and the development of a new law, and a sensitization curriculum for students, the ECWR hopes to make the streets more comfortable for women. In doing so, the organization hopes to draw women back to public and political life.

EDUCATING WOMEN OF THEIR RIGHTS

For women to effectively advocate for themselves, they need to know the scope of their rights. In some countries, including Morocco, family codes provide alternatives for women experiencing violence, including the right to divorce an abusive husband.

MEPI has partnered with Global Rights, a Washington-based NGO with an office in Rabat, Morocco, to train women in the country's family code, the Moudawana. The Moudawana underwent a revision in 2004, spearheaded by Moroccan feminists. The feminists campaigned for changes to the law, which incorporated

women's right to divorce, by framing the amendments in terms of Islam. They explained that granting women certain civil rights is not a Western concept, but rather applies Muslim conceptions of social justice.

To further the education effort, MEPI and Global Rights train NGOs to teach women their legal rights. These groups conduct grass-roots legal rights education for illiterate women throughout Morocco. The project also supports a women's human rights resource center that contains more than 2,000 multilingual, multimedia resources. Global Rights is also engaged in promoting specific legislation to prevent violence against women in Morocco.

(This is a product of the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://www.america.gov>) ♦

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Science on a Sphere is Centerpiece of U.S. Center in Copenhagen

Office of the Spokesman
Washington, DC
December 7, 2009

Visitors to the U.S. Center at the 15th Annual Conference of the Parties (COP-15) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in Copenhagen this week will be greeted by the Center's dynamic centerpiece, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) Science on a Sphere (SOS). The visually-compelling, six-foot computer-driven globe is one of more than 40 such spheres used in science museums and other academic institutions around the world as an educational and outreach tool to demonstrate the environmental processes of planet Earth.

On Tuesday, December 8 at 7:15 pm Copenhagen local time (UTC/GMT+1), NOAA and the U.S. Department of State will conduct a SphereCast beamed to Science on a Sphere locations in the U.S. and overseas. The 60-minute presentation will be led by the

Sphere's inventor, Dr. Alexander "Sandy" MacDonald, director of NOAA's Earth System Research Laboratory (ESRL) in Boulder, Colorado. The SphereCast will also be webcast live via the Department's dedicated COP-15 website: www.cop15.state.gov.

Institutions receiving the SphereCast include: Discovery Science Center, Santa Ana, CA; Museum of Science and Industry, Chicago, IL; Boonshoft Museum of Discovery, Dayton, OH; Maryland Science Center, Baltimore, MD; The Wildlife Experience, Parker, CO; The Alaska State Museum, Juneau, AK; Science Museum of Minnesota, St. Paul, MN; James Madison University, Harrisonburg, VA; Fiske Planetarium, Boulder, CO; Heureka, The Finnish Science Center, Vantaa, Finland; and NOAA ESRL, Boulder, CO.

Dr. MacDonald will present an overview of Earth's climate and how human activities are rapidly altering the natural atmospheric and oceanic systems. His presentation features global data

sets gathered by Earth-observing satellites and model simulations of the climate system. These data sets provide fascinating insights for non-scientists.

In addition to the SphereCast, the Science on a Sphere will have multiple uses in the U.S. Center during the two-week conference. Once a day, scientists from various U.S. government agencies will conduct short, live presentations for Center attendees, followed by a question and answer period. Throughout each day, the Sphere will also show pre-recorded documentary-style films produced by NOAA, NASA, the U.S. Department of Energy and partnering science museums.

The SphereCast will also be available through the U.S. Center's Facebook page: www.facebook.com/usdos.cop15. Information on the SphereCast can also be found on NOAA's Facebook page: <http://www.facebook.com/NOAA.Lubchenco#/scienceonasphere?ref=ts>. ♦

Clinton, Africa Experts Laud Kenya Constitution Reform Process . . .

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was expanded to more than 40 ministries, providing fertile ground for corruption.

Almami Cyllah, Africa regional director for the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES), a nongovernmental organization that partners with Africans on elections, told America.gov he was impressed at how civil society groups formed a part of the constitutional reform process.

"The fact that they are bringing in stakeholders to lend their voice and make recommendations will strengthen civil

society because they will keep a close eye on the process and, if it is passed, will ensure that it is respected and properly implemented," he said.

The effort is praiseworthy, says George Ayittey, a Ghanaian-American economist who teaches at American University and is the founder of the Free Africa Foundation, which has been critical of African ruling elites. But "it should be done in a more deliberative way. The constitution should be a negotiated process and should be undertaken by a consultative assembly made up of a broad section of Kenyan society," he told America.gov.

Ayittey also believes the time limit for constitutional revisions should be extended. "It shouldn't be a rush job and the Kenyan government shouldn't be orchestrating the process. It should be done by an independent body."

A basic problem, said Ayittey, is that most African constitutions make the mistake of copying European examples and the Kenyan revision is no different. "It doesn't really change the unitary system in which power is concentrated at the center," he said.

"What we need is more devolution of authority and a decentralization of power in Africa," Ayittey concluded. ♦

Health Threat Allows U.S. Agency to Regulate Greenhouse Gases

By Cheryl Pellerin
Science Writer

Washington - Greenhouse gases threaten the health and welfare of the American people, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) announced December 7 after resolving a 10-year dispute that went to the U.S. Supreme Court over the EPA's authority to regulate carbon dioxide and other gases as pollutants under the Clean Air Act.

Announcement of the two-part finding ? that six greenhouse gases constitute air pollution and that emissions from new motor vehicles contribute to this pollution and ultimately to climate change ? came during the first day of the 2009 United Nations Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen, where 110 heads of state and 36,000 delegates and attendees will decide when and how the citizens of planet Earth will deal with a changing climate.

"Today's announcement on its own does not impose any new requirements on industry," EPA Administrator Lisa Jackson said at a briefing in Washington, but it is "the prerequisite for strong new emissions standards for cars and trucks."

The EPA issued the proposed findings in April and held a 60-day public-comment period. The agency received more than 380,000 comments that it reviewed and considered as it finalized its findings. The gases are carbon dioxide, methane, nitrous oxide, hydrofluorocarbons, perfluorocarbons and sulfur hexafluoride.

In September, the EPA and the U.S. Department of Transportation proposed the new carbon dioxide emissions standards for model year 2012-2016 "light duty" vehicles, including cars, sport utility vehicles, minivans, personal pickup trucks and passenger vans. The agencies proposed the standards in response to Presi-



Freeway traffic in Los Angeles, California.

dent Obama's call in May for a more aggressive national fuel-efficiency policy.

Road vehicles contribute more than 23 percent of U.S. greenhouse gas emissions. The EPA's proposed standards for the light-duty vehicles, responsible for nearly 60 percent of all U.S. transportation-related emissions, would reduce emissions by nearly 950 million metric tons and conserve 1.8 billion barrels of oil over the vehicles' lifetimes.

LONG, WINDING ROAD

Now that the EPA has determined such emissions endanger health, the environment agency and the Department of Transportation can finalize the proposed light-duty standards.

The decision is timely given the global focus on greenhouse gases, but the story really began in October 1999, when the nonprofit International Center for Technology Assessment (ICTA) and 18 other organizations filed a petition asking the EPA to regulate greenhouse gas emis-

sions from new motor vehicles under the Clean Air Act, the law that defines the EPA's responsibilities for protecting U.S. air quality.

The EPA denied the petition in 2003, saying the Clean Air Act did not authorize the agency to regulate for the purpose of mitigating climate change. In response, ICTA, 13 environmental organizations and 15 U.S. states, territories and municipalities filed petitions asking the U.S. Court of Appeals in Washington to review the EPA decision. The court upheld the EPA decision and the case made its way to the Supreme Court as *Massachusetts versus EPA*.

In 2007, in a 5-to-4 decision, the court ruled in favor of Massachusetts and the other petitioners, finding that the EPA had the authority to regulate carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases and holding that the EPA's denial of the petition was "arbitrary and capricious." The court also ruled that the EPA could avoid regulating greenhouse gases under the Clean Air Act only if the agency determined that greenhouse gases do not contribute to climate change. Two years later, the agency has found that greenhouse gases do endanger public health and contribute to climate change.

BACKUP PLAN

The EPA's finding covers emissions that have been the subject of scrutiny and intense analysis for decades by scientists around the world. But not everyone thinks a regulatory approach is the best way to deal with greenhouse gas emissions.

"My reaction and I think the reaction of many is that EPA is doing this with a legal basis but this is not the right way to approach global climate change," Kevin Trenberth, head of the Climate Analysis Section at the National Center for Atmos-

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Telling America's story

U.S. Struggle Against Hate Crimes . . .

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2001, there were concerns that U.S. Muslims would be victims of bias and revenge attacks based on their ethnicity and religion.

President Obama, whose father was a Muslim, stressed the importance of the Muslim community in the United States to an audience in Cairo June 4. "Let there be no doubt: Islam is a part of America. And I believe that America holds within her the truth that regardless of race, religion or station in life, all of us share common aspirations — to live in peace and security; to get an education and to work with dignity; to love our families, our communities and our God," he said.

Ibrahim Hooper, communications director for the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR), a leading U.S. Muslim advocacy organization, told America.gov that while attacks on Muslims and vandalism of mosques have occurred, "whenever we've brought a bias incident to the attention of law enforcement authorities, whether at the local or state level, we

generally get a good response."

CAIR on December 3 released an annual report, Seeking Full Inclusion, that not only deals with hate crimes against Muslims in America but also cases of bias and discrimination. "We get several thousand reports of discrimination — work place issues and in the schools, things like that — each year, but actual cases of hate crimes — physical violence — tends to be a small category," Hooper said.

Nonviolent examples of bias in the report that are not in the hate crime category, Hooper said, are things like "someone fired because they wanted to wear a headscarf at work; a kid who was harassed at school because he was Muslim; airport and border profiling incidents [that isolate Muslims for extra security scrutiny]; delay of citizenship application based on national origin — those kinds of issues." ♦

Health Threat Allows U.S. Agency to Regulate Greenhouse Gases. . .

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pheric Research in Colorado and a lead author of the assessments produced by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, told America.gov. "It's not broad-based enough and it hasn't got the right tools of incentives as well as penalties. It's very focused on emissions and ... it doesn't deal at all with adaptation issues."

"In an ideal world, Congress would already have passed a climate and clean energy bill," Ron Burke, director of the Union of Concerned Scientists' Midwest office, who testified at one of the EPA's public hearings on the topic, said in a November statement. "Unfortunately that hasn't happened yet and the planet won't wait. That's why it's critical for EPA to address this problem in the meantime as a back-up plan in the event Congress doesn't get the job done."

The EPA said President Obama and Jackson have stated publicly that they support a legislative solution to the problem of climate change and Congress' efforts to pass comprehensive climate legislation.

"The carbon dioxide emissions problem is global, so really it needs to be dealt with in this international framework that's going on in Copenhagen," Trenberth added. "It should not be done on an industry-by-industry or country-by-country basis because that tends to encourage industry to move to a country that hasn't implemented any changes."

Learn more about this and other climate change topics at the America.gov Adaptation! (<http://blogs.america.gov/>



A power-generating plant in Huntington Beach, California.

climate/) blog, and join the conversation at our Facebook page (<http://www.facebook.com/ConversationsClimate>).

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